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ABSTRACT

Profiles of Promise is a series of descriptive brochures that highlight social studies and social education practices that teachers and administrators can easily adapt to their own situation. This number describes efforts at Bell Junior High School in Golden, Colorado to create a democratic environment. In the initial process of establishing goals, Project Director George Carnie talked with students and teachers about opportunities and changes needed. Teachers designed specific activities to allow students to achieve these common objectives. In the process, the principal's power was redistributed to actively involve staff, students, and community in daily operating procedures, staff policies, etc. The redistribution began by listing all school tasks and making them available to the willing and qualified. A process of growth and renewal is the basis for Bell's plan. Four processes form this growth plan: problem solving, school decision-making, open communication, and personal accountability. These four same processes are topics for an inservice program arranged with a nearby university. Individual differences in the need for structure are taken into account, meaning that neither traditional nor innovative teachers are forced into a particular teaching style. A process of continual evaluation, both objective and subjective, provides important feedback on the entire effort. (JLB)

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Toward the Human Element

CREATING A DEMOCRATIC ENVIRONMENT

"Student learning soared," but the project director saw problems with his former Title III media program to individualize instruction. "We got overkill by teaching more, faster," he said of his widely-acclaimed program "but we found that the kids were detesting school because we had forgotten the whole other element – the human element."

This PROFILE OF PROMISE is about former project director George Carnie, a soft-spoken veteran principal, now at Bell Junior High School in Golden, Colorado. It is about his staff, 750 students, their parents, and their combined efforts to develop the human element at Bell. It includes encouragement from the Jefferson County School District and support from CFK, Ltd., a philanthropic foundation.

GOALS AND ROLES

"With established goals you know where you're headed," Carnie states, and shortly after arriving at Bell, he began talking with students. Meeting about 50 each day, he asked them: What do you like about our school? What don't you like? What would you do to improve it? He asked the teachers similar questions, and questions about the kinds of opportunities they felt school should provide for students.

Several school goals were identified, and teachers designed specific activities to allow students to achieve these common "opportunity objectives." Every teacher and department began working toward the objectives. "Like an orchestra, each section has a different thing they do," Carnie reports. "When you bring it together, you've got a group playing together."

"Bringing it together" to achieve school goals also meant that the principal's power was redistributed to actively involve the staff, students, and community in daily operating procedures, staff policies and practices, student programs, and public relations.

This redistribution of power and responsibility to create a participative organization began by listing school tasks and then making them available to anyone – teacher, custodian, parent, or student – who was willing and qualified to assume the responsiblity. "Roles lock you in," they say. "If you're working toward common goals, you don't worry about whose role it is."

Every conceivable school job was listed: buses, long-range planning, discipline, outdoor education, community relations, lunchroom, and more than 40 others. A "Z - C - I" system was devised to see the job through to completion. The person *in charge* of a task is known as the "Z", people who must be *consulted* are "C's", and those who must be *informed* are the "I's". Budget allocations, for example, are determined by the staff and a "Z" serving as coordinator. The "Z", incidentally, is not the principal, who believes that teachers are in the best position to determine instructional needs.

continued

Bringing it together- A mosaic of student faces by Bell students.

Carnie discusses his approach to education in conventional, non-threatening language.

A progressive program in a traditional setting.

Another example of redistributed power and responsibility is the use of three regular teachers as assistant principals. Selected by a staff committee, they are relieved of one-third of their teaching load to serve in the administrative position. The cost is comparable to one full-time assistant principal, but the staff and students think this approach is more effective and better for school morale.

LAWS AND ORDER

Student discipline receives the attention of the administrative team and DDT'S: a *Decentralized Discipline Team* of volunteer teachers working with students referred to the office.

This broadened base for student discipline uses a positive rather than negative approach-- there is no "hatchet man." Through daily contact and encouragement, the team seeks to help students achieve social and academic success. This preventive approach reflects the staff's belief that these problems are often interrelated.

This participative school operation also extends to the actual governance of the building. "The Establishment" – a name suggested by a student – is the official school legislative body. It is composed of four parents, four teachers, and fifteen students, five from each of the three grades. Their decisions are final unless vetoed by the principal, but a two-thirds vote overrides his veto. Establishment decisions must only conform to the law and school board policies.

GROWTH FOR ALL

A process of growth and renewal is the basis for Bell's plan to achieve a more democratic environment. Four processes form the growth plan: problem-solving, school decision-making, open communication, and personal accountability.

A *personal/professional growth plan* is completed by the entire staff, including the principal and non-certified workers. Everyone is accountable to a committee that they select to oversee their progress and provide any needed assistance.

Each process has been designed with four or five self-evaluative statements, accompanied with a 0 to 100 rating scale. Each staff member records "where I am" and "where I'd like to be." Another column provides corresponding space to answer "what I need to do to get there" and "data I'll submit on my progress and when." Typical teacher statements for each of the processes include:

- ☐ *I employ a problem-solving approach to establish and maintain stable limits for my classroom and activities outside the classroom.*
- ☐ *I provide opportunities for students to share in decision-making processes in my classroom.*
- ☐ *When I have a concern or something positive to convey, I voice it directly to those involved.*
- ☐ *I am personally accountable for identifying and providing opportunities for students to be successful at mastering basic academic skills in my classes.*

Teachers at Bell J.H.S. provide specific activities to implement these student opportunity objectives:

1. *a variety of opportunities for each student to succeed in the mastery of basic academic skills.*
2. *opportunities for students to assume responsibility and develop self-discipline.*
3. *opportunities for students to develop an attractive physical environment.*
4. *opportunities for students to better understand themselves, leading to the growth of a positive, realistic self-concept.*
5. *opportunities for students to demonstrate concern for and service to others.*

The same four processes – problem-solving, decision-making, communications, accountability – are topics for an inservice program arranged with a nearby university. Almost the entire staff – teachers, administrators, secretaries, custodians – is taking the course as a group to put college theory into school practice. Teachers receive course credit and their newly-gained knowledge and skill can be applied directly to their classroom experience.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Most educators believe that classrooms need to be structured for some students and that in other cases students can work on their own – in an independent study program, for instance. As a result, the Bell staff has developed teacher-centered, student-teacher-centered, and student-planned classes. The amount of structure that seems best is chosen by the student, his parents, and his teacher. This also means that traditional teachers, as well as innovative teachers, are not forced to adopt a particular teaching style.

The instructional program is further strengthened by more than 225 Bell students tutoring other students. There are also more than 25 students from Golden High School assisting in Bell programs.

"Some people think we're minimizing academics," Carnie says, "but we aren't. We're complementing academics with other aspects important for success in life."

THE REAL WORLD

Students seeking real-life experiences may soon have a community-service program. Until that time, they are involved with Bell's open communication activities. Parents are invited to school each Thursday for a "parent rap session" and a student-conducted tour of the building. The staff feels that open communication is essential for improving the school environment, and teachers have agreed to make two phone calls a week to talk with parents about their children. Not a disciplinary measure, the phone calls provide positive and constructive suggestions for the parents. About 80 calls into the community are made each week by Bell teachers. When Carnie discusses his approach to education, it is in conventional, non-threatening language that is easily understood.

BY THE PEOPLE

These are some of the activities designed to improve education at Bell JHS. Obviously they are not all perfect, but a process of continual evaluation, both objective and subjective, provides important feedback.

Students quickly tell what they like best about their school – "freedom." Ask them what they mean and they respond, "having a say" or "being able to choose." Ask them if this causes any problems and they say, "some kids destroy things or fight." When you ask why, they explain, "some kids lack responsibility."

The staff combines idealism with realism. Some teachers appear apathetic and some are uncertain about student "readiness" for responsibility. Interestingly, some teachers say their own education interferes with their acceptance of some practices. The vast majority are committed to developing the human element.

George Carnie is equally candid about progress at Bell JHS. "We're heading toward," he says. "We haven't arrived."

One man, teachers and staff, 750 students, and their parents heading toward the human element – a profile of promise.

□

Open communication is essential for improving the school environment—Carnie, staff, parents, and students in the cafeteria.

Developing the human element.

Anyone willing and qualified to assume the responsibility.

PRELUDE TO CHANGE

"The typical approach to progress and to many changes in education is to seek a method created by someone else that we can apply to our own situation. Verbal and written signals are given that, I wish someone would suggest an idea that I would feel comfortable in using in my situation.

It is a difficult assignment. There is only one you. Effective improvement for you must come from within– not from without. A prerequisite to improvement is a willingness to change.

Change means to engage in activities that lead you into new directions in education. These are not things that can be done for a person. They are things he must do for himself. Changes occur when individuals sense problems in their situations and seek effective means to resolve them. A person not in your situation is unable to do this for you. When people talk about the changes they want to and can make, the springboard for change has been reached.

From A Handbook for Change. *Compiled by George Carnie.*

If you know of other significant practices write a one page description, including the name and address of a person to contact for further information, and send to:

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For more information concerning the subject of this paper,

WRITE:

Dr. George Carnie
Cooperative School Project
Bell Junior High School
Jefferson County School District
1001 Ulysses, Golden, Colorado 80401

for:

A Handbook for Change
Compiled by Carnie and his staff, the book is a step-by-step guide to developing "the human element" in schools. $5.95.

"People", a 4-minute 16mm color sound film has a message about people that can be used in classrooms or with people of all ages. $40.00 purchase or $5.00 rental for two days.

CFK, Ltd.
3333 South Bannock Street
Englewood, Colorado 80110

for:

Improving Discipline in the Secondary School: A Catalog of Alternatives to Repression, 25c.

The Principal as the School's Climate Leader: A New Role for the Principalship, 25c.

Learning Through Serving, 25c.

Individualized Continuing Education for Administrators, 25c.

Getting Started with an Individualized Continuing Education Program for Schoo Administrators, 25c.

READ:

FREEDOM TO LEARN by Carl Rogers, Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1969. $3.95.

SCHOOLS WITHOUT FAILURE by William Glasser, New York: Harper & Row, 1969. $4.95.

THE OPEN CLASSROOM by Herbert Kohl, New York: Vintage, 1969. $1.65.

ERIC DOCUMENTS

ED 043 668 - An Evaluation of Interpersonal Communication in Flagstaff (Arizona) High School - MF $.65, HC $3.29.

ED 044 400 - Human Relations in the Schools, Sensitivity Training and Self Image Enhancement - MF $.65, HC $3.29.

ED 046 060 - An Investigation of the Relationship between Characteristics of Secondary Schools and Student Alienation - MF $.65, HC $6.58.

ED 046 102 - Environmental Press as Perceived by High School Students and Its Relationship to Organizational Climate - MF $.65, HC $16.45.

ED 051 113 - Human Interaction: A Behavioral Objectives Curriculum in Human Relations - MF $.65, HC $3.29.

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